

TAB

9/11/69

STAT

Received from

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY RATINGS

Attached are the criteria which an Agency employee must satisfy in order to be rated at a particular proficiency level. The demonstrated (tested) ability of an individual to cope with the criteria for each level will be the determining factor in rating his proficiency. The levels described are based upon a relative scale of 0 through 5, where 0 reflects no practical proficiency and 5 equates with an educated native-born individual.

The rating scales described have been developed to provide a meaningful method of characterizing the desired language skills of Agency personnel. Unlike academic grades, which measure the achievement in mastering the content of a prescribed course, the ratings are based on the absolute criterion of the command of an educated native speaker of the language.

The definition of each proficiency level has been worded so as to be applicable to every language; obviously the amount of time and training required to reach a certain level will vary widely from language to language, as will the specific linguistic features of the language involved. With this reasoning, persons with a "3" (Intermediate) rating in both Chinese and French, for example, should have approximately equal linguistic competence in the two languages. In the upper levels, stress is placed on accuracy of structure, precision of vocabulary sufficient to be both acceptable and effective in dealings with the educated citizen of the foreign country, and cultural nuances, as well as fluency.

All ratings except the "5" level may be modified by a plus (+), indicating that proficiency substantially exceeds the minimum requirements for the level concerned but falls short of those for the next higher level.

ORAL/AURAL SKILLS
(S)

Level

An individual must be able to:

- 1 (Slight) Satisfy minimum courtesy requirements, usually with frequent errors and with sharply limited vocabulary. Handle simple situations of daily life and travel, such as getting temporary lodging, asking and giving simple directions, ordering a plain meal, and making purchases. Pronounce the language at least well enough to be understood by a native speaker accustomed to dealing with foreigners. Understand simple questions and statements, allowing for slowed speech, repetition, or paraphrase.
- 2 (Elementary) Satisfy routine social demands, such as formal introductions and casual conversations about current events, work, and autobiographical information. Converse confidently, if not with facility, with people he deals with in the course of daily activities. Use basic constructions accurately, with acceptable weaknesses in more complex structures and some deficiencies in vocabulary. Pronounce the language generally intelligibly, though occasionally producing misunderstood words or phrases. Get the gist of most conversations on general subjects which require no specialized knowledge.
- 3 (Intermediate) Speak with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations in social, professional, and other daily situations. Respond in unfamiliar situations with reasonable ease, using a vocabulary broad enough so that he rarely has to grope for a word. Speak with good control of grammar, making occasional minor errors which do not interfere with communication. Pronounce the language with an accent which, though obviously foreign, is always understandable. Comprehend most of what is said at a normal conversational rate of speech.
- 4 (High) Use the language fluently, idiomatically, and accurately in all non-technical situations, with extensive and precise vocabulary, nearly perfect grammar, and an accent closely approximating that of native-born speakers. Understand the content of all conversations and formal presentations within the range of his experience, missing only those further refinements mentioned in the "5" category.
- 5 (Native) Use the language in a manner equivalent to that of an educated native-born speaker. Speak fluently and accurately in all practical and social situations, and freely and idiomatically in his special fields. His speech on all levels will be fully accepted in all of its features, including breadth of vocabulary, idioms, colloquialisms, and pertinent cultural references. Understand all non-technical conversations and formal presentations, as well as technical discourse in his field.

Level

An individual must be able to:

- 1 (Slight) Read basic material consisting of uncomplicated sentences and phrases concerning common everyday activities.
- 2 (Elementary) Read factual material on non-technical subjects, such as simple news stories and routine correspondence. Comprehend the most commonly used structures and idioms.
- 3 (Intermediate) Read most newspaper items, as well as social, political, and economic material written for the general public. Comprehend the more complex structures and low-frequency idioms with some difficulty.
- 4 (High) Read difficult prose on general subjects, such as editorials. Read all styles and forms of the language except those further refinements included in the "5" category.
- 5 (Native) Except for highly specialized or technical material, read anything in the language, including subtleties, innuendoes, literary allusions, slang, and newspaper headlines.